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# FASHIONS AND HABITS :

MORE ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD

TO CHILDREN,

FROM A SANITARY POINT OF VIEW.

BY

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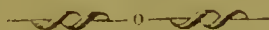
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## On Present Fashions and Habits with regard to Children.



In the following pages I purpose drawing attention to some of those dangers to the civilized human race, which are engendered by certain habits and fashions, especially with regard to young children.

Having no wish to wound the susceptibilities of any man or woman, I shall simply endeavour to show, by the light of science, what fashions, etc., are detrimental to our race, inasmuch as the majority still follow them. It may perhaps be thought strange and impertinent that a man should presume to criticise the habits and fashions of his fellow creatures, more especially when such relate to the vexed questions of dress and modes of living ; or that he should dare to call in question those articles of wearing apparel, which society has pronounced to be correct. But to those members of society who call a man Quixotic, whenever he attempts to overturn any of their cherished habits, by the aid of a very powerful weapon, known to the initiated as *common sense* ; or who throw epithets at him, instead of using the brains they have for the purposes they were intended, I would suggest that there are always two sides to a question.

Whilst they think the dictates of fashion are sacred, and not to be obstructed or overturned, there is a growing feeling in this age of civilization and progress, that man has bound himself in chains of fashion and habit, which hinder him in his march towards perfection ; which retard and often completely prevent the thorough development of his frame ; and which it is high time he flung aside, that he might continue his progress unimpeded. There are, however, many men

who, though not belonging to the initiated class of which I have the honour to be one of the rank and file, have, without deeply diving into causes, seen the errors into which they had fallen, or been brought up in by the usages of the society in which they moved, men who seeing the damage caused by blindly following any habit or fashion, simply at the bidding or dictates of society, have asserted their own power of independent action, and are now interested in rescuing from their blindness those who are still the slaves of fashionable folly.

I do not intend to make a ruthless raid upon any fashion which is harmless : what I intend, is to expose in all their stupidity and folly, those habits and fashions which are, as I have said, obstacles in the paths of development and progress. I do not mean to show up the follies of classes of people, but only those wide-spread ones, of which it is necessary to the public that it should be in a position to judge, and that is the object of this lecture.

There must be a complete understanding between us. I intend to use plain language, and you must bring your common-sense to bear on the subject, and understand, that though I shall probably use words which are not frequently made use of in public lectures, I shall not employ them, except for the purpose of being plainly understood, and making clear to you what I wish to convey. If any man or woman thinks me indelicate in my choice of words, I simply reply in the language of him who founded the Order of the Garter, "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*" : " Evil be to him who evil thinks."

The public mind has been much exercised, and I hope instructed of late, by the increase of the death-rate of this Borough, once so renowned for the health of its inhabitants. Now we have a Sanitary Committee, which intends to alter the existing conditions, and put the houses and streets in order, so that the rate may be reduced, and it is thereby hoped that many deaths may be prevented. Small-pox, which of late was busily killing and disfiguring the people, has, in consequence, brought the governing powers of this Borough into a state of activity—the whole town was alarmed, and why? There are two things that men and women don't like interfered with,

when they possess them—a good looking face, and a well lined pocket. Pit a good-looking man's face with small-pox, and you touch him on his sorest and weakest point—his vanity. Put your hand into the ratepayers pocket for sanitary or other town improvements, for which he sees no dividend, either present or prospective, and you do him a deadly injury, one he will not forgive you for. But let scarlet fever stalk through the town, let it never be driven out, let it carry off or damage the olive branches, in which a good man's strength lies, let criminal thoughtlessness complete the work of that mighty pest, adding insult to injured nature, by giving it at the earliest possible moment to another set of innocents, that it may run riot in virgin soil, and so be propagated to form new centres of infection. Will the ratepayer cry out to be relieved of these scourges? Will he cheerfully submit to be isolated from the rest of the people, until danger is past? Will he send the bed linen to be purified, to prevent further mischief to others? Not he! He raves and prates about other people with small-pox, and asks "Why are people allowed to spread small-pox?" "Why can't they go to the Infirmary?" Ask him about Scarlet-fever, and why he does not think of the risk he is causing to others. He says it is not his fault. It is the Will of the Almighty, that his children are carried off. Then I say that it is the Will of the Almighty that his face shall be deeply scarred, and his vanity sorely wounded. It is high time that such pernicious nonsense as the dragging in of the Almighty's Will to account for such matters should be thrown over by the whole of the community. As well say that it is the Will of the Almighty that your horse should stumble and fall in frosty weather. So it is, no doubt; but the Almighty Will warned and directed you to have your unfortunate animal rough-shod before you started—told you, when the horse was down, to get the harness off him at once, so that he might get up again. Put your shoulder to the wheel, for God has ordained that Small-pox shall visit and mark you, until you comply with His laws, and be clean.

Epidemics are scourges due to and arising solely and only from man's negligence of the laws of health.

## PRESENT FASHION OF DRESSING BABES.

Let us take the case of a child just born. For month's previous to its birth the mother has been preparing a whole host of clothes, of a kind, which custom and hereditary fashion have decided upon, as fit and proper for the babe to be clothed with; the majority of which, common sense and reason would denounce as being totally unfit for a new-born babe to wear; unfit because they do not comply with those laws of health, which more particularly refer to infants. Let me briefly point out those laws.

1st.—Warmth, (not dependent on the circulation of the child's own blood) is essential to its development.

2nd.—The lungs, which bring the child's blood in contact with the oxygen of the air, must have full play; that is, no part of the body must be tightly wrapped up, which by the movement of its muscles assist in breathing.

3rd.—It is necessary to the proper development of the child that its limbs shall be free in all their movements.

There are other minor laws which might be pointed out, but these are sufficient to bring in a "true bill" against the present system of clothing babes.

The question may arise in your minds, does not the present system fulfil the requirements of these laws? Most assuredly not. Just look for a moment at the underclothing. What does it usually consist of? First, a garment of flannel, wrapped or bound round the bowels and two-thirds of the chest, commonly called a binder. This is supposed to give support to the child, and no mother thinks that her child is properly dressed unless this piece of folly is firmly wrapped round it, and fastened up with pins. The folly lies in the non-fulfilment of that law which requires that the lungs shall have full play; and also in the idea that the shape of the child's figure would not be correct if the binder was omitted. Just imagine for a moment the condition of the lungs of a child so bound up. The child has only just begun to draw in the common air for the purpose of warming its blood and carrying on life on its own account, when the movement of the muscles of the belly



and the chest, so necessary to proper breathing, are prevented from moving to their full extent by the binder. The flannel, it is true, does keep the child warm, because it is, what it is called, a good non-conductor, that is, it does not readily allow the natural heat of the child to escape into the air, therefore flannel is one of the best materials with which a babe can be dressed.

The next article of dress is a piece of linen, which is either slipped over the head of the child, and its arms thrust through a pair of make-believe sleeves. This reaches down to the child's buttocks, and is loose ; or it sometimes is made to fasten behind, either with tapes or pins, instead of being in one piece. This is made so that the child's neck and windpipe are left exposed, and the arms and hands not covered.

Next, we have an assortment of flannel and linen, about which I have nothing to say, except that they are totally useless, therefore superfluous. Then we find a flannel skirt, which reaches a long way past the toes, and is tied or pinned round the waist. This in itself is partly in the right direction, but it is used wrongly, and is not in its proper place. It does not fall in with the necessities of law 2 ; for being tied or pinned round the waist, it is interfering with the freedom of the lungs and the movements of the breathing muscles. On the top of all we find an elaborate garment, embroidered, befrilled, and belaced, having what ought to be sleeves, and would be but for the love of finery, which so many mother's indulge in—I mean the bows of ribbon which are made to tie up the sleeves with, and which necessarily leave the arms bare. This garment is tied round the waist with tapes, or fastened up with pins. This tying round the waist is one of the follies I have before mentioned as not in accordance with law No. 2. A pair of tiny wollen socks, blue and white, if the bows are blue, or pink, or some other colour, with the bows to correspond, and then the child is supposed to be dressed, and the mother thinks her child has no equal ; and it would be a good thing for the future of other children if it had no equal.

As it is imperative that some cloth should be placed to receive the



child's excretions, for the purpose of removal and cleanliness, another garment is to be added to the above list. This is a square cloth, folded cornerwise, passed round the child's loins, and the corners brought up between the thighs, to meet the two ends over the bowels. This is pinned up tightly, and is a source of great irritation to infants, from the constant rubbing, through the child's movements to free itself of the encumbrance; besides it prevents the movements of the breathing muscles, and freedom of the hip-joint, therefore does not fulfil law No. 2.

### HINTS ON MATERIALS FOR DRESS, AND BEST MODES OF DRESSING BABES.

If mother's would be wise, and take advantage of the laws of health, they would save expense, time, trouble, and damage to their children. It is very easy and simple to dress a child in accordance with such laws. Let the clothing first of all be bad conductors of heat, such as flannel or silk if it can be afforded. A loose flannel gown of a good length, and tolerably thick stuff, may be made to envelope the body, arms, and legs, of a babe, so that all parts of the child shall be fairly covered, and all openings fastened up with tape, which may be tied up tightly, but must not bind any part. As the child should for the best part of the day, and night be asleep, and only awake during its feeding time, this amount of clothing is quite sufficient; as the child grows, another garment, made in the same fashion may be added; but every one of these clothes should be made to open over the chest, and not at the back. This question of where a child's clothes should be made to fasten is a very important one, and on which much of the child's comfort depends. If made to open at the back, the child has to be taken on the knee and laid on its chest. This interferes with breathing, and the child's head hangs down by its own weight, for it is very heavy, and the child is unable to hold it up, for the muscles are very young, and unaccustomed to their work at that period of existence. Therefore the head is left to dangle, much to the child's annoyance. The child should seldom, if ever, be upon the nurse's knee, except in the case of feeding. It should be laid

upon the bed for all purposes, except sleeping, when it should be placed in its cot. A pillow is a very useful thing to lay a babe upon for purposes of dressing and undressing, or when inclined to be awake and wanting to be amused, which it often does as it grows older. Our summary then is, dress the child in warm, soft, loose clothing. Never wash or dress the child upon the knee; take care that there are no pins in its clothing, and then you have all of the three most important laws of health, with regard to dress, fulfilled.

### THE PRESENT MODES OF FEEDING AND THEIR RESULTS.

There is a very wide-spread habit amongst nursing mothers and nurses, which is a fruitful source of evil, and which helps largely to swell the death-rate in all large towns. I refer to the practice of giving bread and milk, bread and water, corn-flour, arrowroot, rusks and farinaceous food of any kind, to young children under seven months old. This habit arises simply from the fact that ignorance of the laws of feeding is still prevalent, and will remain so, until physiology is made part of the system of education of the young. Here is a good opportunity, however, of explaining the Physiological laws involved in the feeding of infants.

1st.—The food of babes is provided for them ready mixed in those proportions, which nature has proved over and over again to be the best for the purpose she has in view, namely the proper and gradual development of the organism to be nourished. This food is milk.

2nd.—The child up to the seventh month has no teeth, therefore is incapable of mastication, consequently is unable to prepare starch foods so that they might be properly digested or acted upon by the salivary and gastric juices.

3rd.—As it is a rule in nature that the particular food for any animal is prepared specially, and is generally ready for consumption at the time of its birth; and as one kind of food only is prepared, and that specially adapted to the wants of the animal; so milk, the universal natural diet for sucklings, is specially prepared by special

glands, special processes, and at a special time, namely, when required.

If milk, then, is not the proper food for infants, and bread, corn-flour, etc., is, why does not nature provide the starch food by a special process, such as she prepares milk? Bread is an artificial food, but milk is a natural one. Why is it then that bread, &c., is given so largely to babes? Mothers and nurses say that the child is not satisfied with milk, however much is given. This arises because no method is adopted in feeding the child, but its food is given to it *indiscriminately and not regularly*.

#### THE BEST MODES OF FEEDING AND NURSING BABES UP TO SIX MONTHS OLD.

A child, for the first three or four weeks of its life, should be fed every two hours during the day, (sleep being allowed between times) and twice or thrice in the night, but not oftener, as when food is given too often it is liable to pass through the body almost unchanged. After the first month, the hours should be altered a little: they should be slightly extended, every  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours being sufficient up to the age of three months. In the fourth month of its existence it should be fed every three hours during the day, and once or twice in the night, and this state of things may continue up to the end of the fifth month, when its food should be given every four hours, and once only in the night. As far as feeding hours are now concerned, the child, is almost in the same condition as an adult, viz., three times in the day only, but unlike the adult it is fed once in the middle of the night. This is actually necessary, as the child is unable to stand a prolonged fast like a grown up person: for fasting means an arrest of the child's development, and not, as occur in the adult, simply a rest for the stomach. The folly of feeding a child as often as it cries results in a large increase of the death-rate of children under one year old, and this high rate may easily be prevented if parents would try to find out the cause of the cry, instead of diverting the child's attention by giving it food. Children do not cry for food unless they are being starved; but for a multitude of other reasons, among which may be reckoned, cold, tight clothing, pressure, pins running in their

skins, soiled linen, so called nursing by children only a little older, sudden or loud noises, strong light, sudden movements, being allowed to lie too long in one position, its head being allowed to dangle whilst being washed, and the usual rough handling which even tender mothers indulge in. I have tried on many occasions to prevent the almost martyrdom that babes have to undergo from the mistaken notions of their affectionate mothers. What grown up person would like to be treated as babes are? Suppose, now, that we imagine an adult fallen into the hands of a giantess, who bears the proportion of size and strength to him as a mother to her newly born babe. Let us put you through the process of washing and dressing, my friend. Turn you over from one knee to the other suddenly; put you first in one position and then another; lay you down on your face and pat you on the back whilst you are crying from being tightly bound and tied up, or a pin accidentally passed through the clothes into your skin. Then imagine yourself laid on your back in a wickerwork cradle, your whole body and face covered up from the atmosphere, whilst your kind-hearted nurse nearly drives you out of your senses, as she makes your cradle rock side-ways to its own creaking melody. How would you like to be picked up by this nurse with a hand under each arm-pit, whilst she compresses your sides together and almost prevents you from breathing? Or, after being washed upon her knees before the fire, (which is the most draughty part of the room), your arm is stretched out or doubled up in an almost vain attempt to make it go through an unyielding sleeve. Again, what would be your feelings, if she gave you a food which always produced pain and prevented you from sleeping by the paroxysm it produced, and which was calculated to cause serious diseases? Would you not cry out? Would not pain, passion, and rage, make you go almost black in the face? If you could escape from her would you not do so? Yes, indeed, you would say, and be thankful. Well then, that is just what happens to babes, with this most important exception, that they have not the power to escape such persecution, and consequently are compelled to go through their daily punishment. I shall be glad when the day arrives that mothers

and nurses shall handle their children as they would delicate and expensive pieces of machinery, instead of the rough and ready fashion which usually attends nursing.

### TEETHING, WEANING, FEEDING, AND EXERCISE.

We have followed the child thus far to the beginning of its sixth month of existence. The trials of teething are now about to begin, and the mother's temper is often sorely tried by the constant irritability of the child; the usual signs in the mouth are apparent, and at the seventh month the front teeth appear. Now is the time to commence the difficult process of weaning, for nature has in the most unmistakable manner indicated that the child's food must be changed. What is the ordinary fashion with regard to this important period of the child's life. Why just this:—the mother argues that the child is in pain through the coming of the teeth, and therefore she considers it necessary to give the child more food than ever and oftener, so that its pains and cries may be appeased. But this is adding an obstruction to the welfare of the child, for if, as often happens, and more especially to a child that has been previously improperly fed, the pressure of the teeth upon the nerves of the gums, causes irritation to the great nerve centres, i.e., the brain and spinal chord. This overloading of the stomach sends up another message to the brain of distress, and that organ, unable to bear the repeated irritation, is also unable to perform its duties of guiding and controlling the various organs over whom it presides, and thus convulsions occur and recur with frightful rapidity. Many a bright child has been lost from this absurd habit of overfeeding; and many a mother congratulates herself on the wreaths of fat which disfigures her child, and renders it liable to disease; for a superabundance of fat is not a sign of health, but the reverse; and this class of children (who are thus unhappily fattened by their mothers) is the first to succumb to any kind of disease to which it may be subjected.

There is, however, another class of children who have not so apparently thrived upon sop, and these are not able to cut their teeth at the proper time, because the bread food with which they had been dosed, began in their early months, to cause emaciation by means of a



diarrhœa, which was nature's method of throwing out the poison with which they were daily fed. This wasting disease is caused by the bread-food or sop not being a source of nutrition, but a real means of starvation, because the digestive organs are unable from their tender and delicate age to abstract any nourishment whatever from it, and thus the child is as much starved as though it had been purposely kept without food.

Such children never reach maturity, and the medical man can only stand by and lament the ignorance which has blighted the growth of so many unfortunate children ; for, as a rule he is not consulted until all the damage has been done that can be. It is this kind of ignorance I want to see removed from out of our midst, and it is with this in view that I take up this part of sanitary science, which is of as much importance as those matters which engaged the Sanitary Conference so lately held in this town.

I have on four occasions threatened to refuse certificates of death in those cases, where after I had explained to the mother or nurse that the children must no longer be fed on sop, as they would die, they had continued to give it with the evident intention of causing the death of the children. Unfortunately there is no wholesome law with which we could visit such inhuman wretches as these I speak of ; but I may say that in two of those cases I had the satisfaction of saving the babes for the time being, but the others were not to be retrieved. I had no proof that the children were still fed on sop, other than that the condition of the little patients gradually grew worse ; and if I had refused the certificate, the Coroner would have held an inquest, and I do not know that the law can punish anyone for such misdeeds ; I wish indeed that it could. But far better than the penalties of the law would it be that parents should be fully informed on these matters ; that it should be made part of their state education to study whilst unmarried those laws which are required to be put in force for the successful rearing of offspring.

Suppose the child to be going successfully through the various stages of teething, and that it has several teeth through, it should be

fed with the different kinds of starched food, but milk should be its principal drink, instead of which it has been my misfortune to see children fed upon anything there happened to be on the table, whilst tea and coffee were given as drinks. Why should children begin to suffer from indigestion so soon after their food has been taken? Because, first, quantity and not quality is considered, and the child's stomach must be overloaded to produce anything like a feeling of satisfaction. This, of course, is a state of matters that the stomach cannot put up with without informing its guardian, the brain, which is often so overpowered by the message that the child tumbles off to sleep (to use a phrase which is very characteristic of the inability of the brain to keep awake). Second, where tea or coffee is given and their stimulating effect has passed off, the child's brain is exhausted, it can't regulate the the action of the stomach, and indigestion results. No child under fifteen or twenty<sup>1</sup> years of age ought to know the taste of tea or coffee any more than it should have a practical acquaintance with the use or abuse of tobacco or stimulating drinks. Now with regard to exercise. Much damage is done to the race by the foolish habits parents indulge in—I mean making their infant attempt to stand or walk before the child's framework is fitted to keep it in the upright position. The child should never be put upon its feet, it will get upon them in due season, if it be allowed to scramble on all fours a sufficient length of time. The crooked, bandy, bow-legged men we see in the town, are the results of anxious parents foolishly inclined to gratify their own desires at the heavy expense of the child's development.

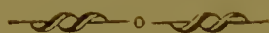
Then take that dangerous vehicle, the perambulator. What good has it ever done? Nay! what harm has it not done? Look in our streets on a Spring morning, still cold with the remembrance of Winter and see the condition of the unfortunate children in the double-breasted perambulator of this age. Red noses, purple cheeks, and cold toes, show the influence of the weather is busily engaged in sewing broad-cast, colds and coughs. Then the nurse-maid has some one to chat with at the corner of the street, and the children must sit in the perambulator till she pleases to move. They are scolded for crying, often punished



for being passionate, and the seeds of bad temper are vigorously developed. The child's warmth is taken from him, his brain irritated and the blood driven to the internal organs, to cause congestion and inflammation. Take the Summer time when the air is warm and dry, how useful is the perambulator then? Why it is worse than ever. The child is exposed to the fierce rays of the sun, falls asleep from being jolted and bumped about by the carelessness of the nurse, and stands a very good chance of getting a sun stroke. Children are capable of taking a considerable amount of exercise in their own fashion, and give in when they are tired; but when out for nearly the whole of the morning in one of those miscalled perambulators, they are unable to take that physical exercise which they would enjoy. They are fastened in with straps which effectually prevents them from moving about or shifting their position. A child that cannot walk should be carried out of doors for a short distance only, first on one arm, then on the other; but a child that can walk might be allowed with profit to itself to push an empty perambulator, and that is all it should ever have to do with one.

#### REMARKS ON THE DRESS OF CHILDREN OF TWO YEARS OLD AND UPWARDS.

There are many other habits relating to dress upon which I ought not to be silent, that cause much discomfort and disease to children of three years and upwards; such for instance as short dresses, bare arms and legs, thick soled boots, which in some instances are made to lace up higher than the ankle, and short socks, which cover the legs only for about three inches above the ankle. These are a few of those absurd follies which (when practised as unfortunately to a large extent in towns) are serious impediments to the development of children in many ways. Let us see what they do, and how to remedy these defects in the mode of dressing. A child two years or even less has been wearing ever since it came into the world, what are popularly known as "long clothes." These kept the legs and feet protected from cold, but unfortunately, as I have pointed out, were deficient in the means of protecting the throat, chest, waist, and arms, from injury by cold and pressure. Now as the



Finis.

